

1930, I was able to find, in addition to the nest already described, three nests containing two eggs each, whilst a number of nests containing well-developed young were also noted. The young birds, when reaching the stage of leaving the nest, which appeared to be about three weeks after hatching, were being mainly fed on vegetable matter, unlike the very young bird previously mentioned. From records it appears that the breeding season extends from August to January, probably three, and certainly two broods being reared.

Notes on the Green Catbird

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Of the two species of Catbirds inhabiting Australia, the southern or green form, *Ailurædus crassirostris*, is the larger. Its range extends from the brushes of south-eastern Queensland down the coast, where the rain forest or brush country exists, to the southern border of New South Wales. The birds are definitely more plentiful at the northern and southern extremities of their range than elsewhere. Although nowhere common, frequently pairs can be located in suitable areas, densely-timbered watercourses being most favoured. After the duties of nidification are completed they congregate in small flocks, often being accompanied by both the Regent and Satin Bower-birds in the northern portion of their range, and by the latter in the districts south of Sydney. They somewhat resemble the immature males and adult females of the Bower-birds, but can be readily distinguished by their larger size and predominating green plumage.

One of the most interesting features of the bird is its remarkable cat-like "me-ow" call, the second portion of which is much longer and louder than the first. Some observers have likened these notes to the crying of a child as well as to the mewling of a cat. In addition to the call by which it has become well known, the Catbird possesses another weak note similar to the one frequently uttered by another inhabitant of similar country, the Rufous Fantail. These latter sounds are usually given when alarmed, particularly when attending to young.

During a visit to the Mt. Tambourine district of south-eastern Queensland some time ago, I was struck by the frequency of the sounds uttered, in comparison with those of the birds observed in the vicinity of Sydney. The Mt. Tambourine pairs reminded me, so far as the repetition of notes was concerned, of the northern form (*A. melanotus*), seen during a trip to the Barron River in north Queensland. The northern members of this family also call throughout

the day and, judging by the oft-repeated "me-ow" calls they are common, although the denseness of the scrubs prevents their being easily seen. My experience with the southern birds is that only on rare occasions do they call through the day and even then the cries are given early in the breeding season, which commences early in October and continues to December or January. Most calls have been heard just before the dawn—they sound very loud at that time as few other brush inhabitants have commenced to move about so early. They also frequently call at dusk.

During the month of October two years ago, I had the fortunate experience of locating a mating pair at Lilyvale, south of the New South Wales National Park. My attention was first arrested when a pair flew from a densely-timbered creek towards a rocky hillside lightly timbered with turpentine, black wattle and various species of eucalypts. The flight was quick and graceful in comparison with the awkward movements of the bird when feeding. During this flight both of the birds gave the usual drawn-out cat-like calls, one chasing the other in and out of the trees. Finally they perched and after a short period began calling again for several seconds. After the calls they spent about twenty seconds preening their feathers, then the chasing operations were resumed, both acting as before. Evidently tiring after a short time the birds returned to the spot whence they had first emerged and remained quiet. This display was witnessed shortly after midday. Being near the area approximately three hours later I decided to sit and watch for the birds and my patience was soon rewarded for the same performance was repeated shortly after my sitting down. Anticipating that building operations may have commenced, a search was begun along a rock-strewn creek, partly covered overhead in places with the fronds of tree ferns and vines. From a spot near where they had moved earlier, an almost-completed nest was located six feet from the ground in a bushy sapling (*Eugenia* sp.). Fortunately it could be looked into from the ground without disturbing the surrounding foliage. Neither of the owners appeared during the examination, nor were they noted nearby.

The following week-end another visit to the site was made, and on my reaching the nesting tree a bird flew off, swooped to the ground, fluttered along over a heap of decaying timber and ferns, and disappeared from view. No notes were uttered and a search failed to locate the bird. On examining the structure it was found to contain a single egg. The following day another inspection of the nest showed it still to contain one egg. I visited the locality again the following week-end and found that the bird was sitting. Again it flew off near the ground and fluttered

away through the undergrowth without calling or immediately returning. The nest on this occasion held the usual complement of two eggs. In this same locality I have seen a nest holding three eggs. The eggs may easily be distinguished from those of the northern form by their richer colouring and larger size.

The nest is a large cup-shaped structure composed of fine twigs, vine stems and rootlets; a number of broad leaves are worked into the structure, particularly at the base; the egg cavity is lined with vine tendrils, pieces of fern stalks and a few leaves. A typical nest measured as follows: external diameter ten inches, external depth six inches, egg cavity six and a half inches in diameter, by a depth of three inches. Nests are placed at various heights from the ground—from six feet to forty feet. A variety of nesting sites are chosen, some birds nesting in vines and tree ferns, the majority, however, preferring a bushy sapling with plenty of small upright branches to support the nest.

Catbirds apparently remain constant to the one nesting territory for several seasons, and at Lilyvale I have counted three old nests in a space of a few yards, also, on another occasion, a nest in use and an old one in the same tree.

Young when hatched are covered with a dark brown down and the head remains in that state for a period after feathers have appeared on the body. Both of the parents attend to the feeding of the young. The male cannot be distinguished from the female in the field and young resemble the adults, except that their colouring is much duller.

Their food consists of palm seeds, flower buds, various kinds of berries, both indigenous and introduced, and occasionally beetles and millepedes. In addition to the items mentioned I have noted them feeding on small apples that were beginning to ripen, and Mr. Norman Chaffer has recorded in *The Emu* (vol. XXXI, p. 62) having seen them feeding on peaches growing wild in the Hawkesbury River district near Gosford.

Occasional references to the Catbirds as bower builders have been made in *The Emu*, principally in district bird lists. They do not appear to be justified, for no definite records of bower construction or even the use of primitive playgrounds have been established.

A final reminder is given of the list of migratory birds, information concerning the movements of which is required, sent to members in October, 1936. Please fill in the desired particulars and return the forms at the end of 1937.